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| J. K. Huysmans | <p>Against the Grain, or Against Nature By Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848-1907)</p> <p>"THE BOOK THAT DORIAN GRAY LOVED AND THAT INSPIRED OSCAR WILDE". Such is the enticing epigraph of one early translation of Huysmans' cult novel of 1884, which is also routinely called the Bible of Decadence. Accurate descriptions, both, of this bizarre masterpiece which has reverberated ever since through high and popular culture.</p> <p>"Against Nature" (or in this version "Against The Grain") explores to the furthest limit the life of the world-rejecting aesthete living a reclusive existence devoted entirely to artificial paradises of his own devising. This is no solemn tract, however: the book's anti-hero Duc Jean Floressas Des Esseintes spectacularly fails to achieve his life's work, as all his attempts to create worlds of perverse experience through synaesthesia and interior decoration prove ludicrously unsatisfying and injurious to health. An innocent tortoise also falls casualty to his theories, in the wonderful fifth chapter.</p> <p>This is probably a novel best savoured one chapter at a time, and not only because John Howard's clunky translation makes indigestible listening. Those who can skip whole chunks without guilt would do well to avoid chapters 4, 7, 12 and 14. Revel, however, in the wonders of 5, 8, 9 and 11. Encounter the jewel-encrusted chelonian, the butch lady acrobat, the nightmarish orchids that cause the hero to exclaim "All is Syphilis"...</p> <p>Alas, this translation lacks a chapter, and two brief incidents are also suppressed on account of their sexual perversity. Enjoy what remains. (Summary by Martin Geeson)</p> <p>Read by Martin Geeson; total running time: 09:14:19. Dedicated Proof-Listeners: BettyM; mim@can. Meta-Coordinator/Cataloging: icyjumbo.</p> <p>This recording is in the public domain and may be reproduced, distributed, or modified without permission. For more information or to volunteer, visit librivox.org.</p> <p>Cover illustration by <i>Tammy Hinton</i>. http://www.publicdomainpictures.net/view-image.php?image=946&picture=grunge. Cover design by Janette Brown. This design is in the public domain.</p> | Against the Grain, or Against Nature |
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